



INDEPENDENCE ★ MISSOURI ★

A GREAT AMERICAN STORY

City Council Study Session Minutes

April 13, 2026 6:00 PM

20201 E. Jackson Drive
First Floor, Oregon and Santa Fe Conference Room
Independence, MO 64057

COUNCIL SPONSORED ITEMS

Mayor Rory Rowland, Presiding Officer of the City Council, called the meeting to order. Upon roll call, the following members were present: Jared Fears, Brice Stewart, Bridget McCandless, Jennie Vaught, and John Perkins. Heather Wiley appeared via Teams. None were absent.

Susanne Holland, City Clerk, swore in the new City Manager Troy Anderson.

1. 26-718 A resolution declaring the City of Independence to have environmental health standards consistent with Jackson County (*Sponsored by Councilmember McCandless*)

This item is sponsored by Councilmember McCandless. CM McCandless stated that she would motion to postpone the item indefinitely during the next council meeting. She is requesting that a study be completed to ensure we are not doubling the standards the County already has regarding this topic.

CITIZEN REQUESTS

1. Citizen Requests - Per Council Rules, Sec. 6.4 only "Council Sponsored Items" are eligible

Councilmember Perkins motioned to suspend the rules to allow non-citizens to speak. Seconded by Councilmember McCandless.

AYES (7): Mayor Rowland, Councilmember Fears, Councilmember Stewart, Councilmember McCandless, Councilmember Vaught, Councilmember Perkins, Councilmember Wiley

NAYS (0): None

ABSENT (0):

Item passes 7-0

The following people spoke on this item. Scott Qualls, Stephanie Robinson and Kelly Jabs.

PRESENTATIONS

1. Risk Management Update

Melissa Cabrera, Director Finance; James Charlesworth, Risk Manager at Charlesworth; and Nicole Thompson, Safety and Compliance Program Administrator presented this item.

Overview

1. Financial Overview
2. Claims Experience & Cost Drivers
3. Root Causes
4. Financial Outlook & Risk Exposure
5. Path to Stabilization & Sustainability

1. Financial Overview

Risk Management Fund

- Purpose
 - Funds liability and property risks
 - Stabilizes costs across departments
 - Supports self-insurance strategy
- Revenue Sources
 - Department Allocations
 - Investment earnings
- Coverage Sources
 - General liability
 - Auto liability
 - Property
 - Law enforcement
 - Excess/umbrella

Worker's Compensation fund

- Purpose
 - Covers employee work-related injuries and illnesses
 - Pays medical and wage replacement costs
 - Supports safe return-to-work programs
- Revenue Sources

Department Allocations

Investment earnings

- Coverage Sources

Medical Treatment

Lost Wages

Disability benefits

Legal and claim Administration

Proposed Budget

1. Finance Staff meets with Charlesworth in February to start budget projections
2. Charlesworth estimates next year expenditures for premiums and outstanding liabilities
3. Cost allocation is determined using claims trends
4. Budget staff enter cost allocations in departmental budgets

Claims Trends

Claims trends look at how claims are behaving over time, not just what happened in a single year.

Claims trends typically ask three core questions:

1. Are we having more claims or fewer?
2. Are claims becoming more expensive?
3. Are claims taking longer to resolve?

Claims trends help to:

1. Identify problem areas (specific depts. or operations)
2. Predict future costs
3. Measure safety effectiveness
4. Control insurance and reserve costs

Claims Experience & Cost Drivers

- Claims Frequency (How Often Claims Occur) Number of incidents (vehicle accidents, injuries, liability claims)
- Claims Severity Size of settlements or judgments, medical costs, and litigation outcomes
- Workers Comp Duration Length of time employees remain on claims
- High-Risk Operations Police, Fire/EMS, Utilities and other Public Works exposures
- Litigation & Legal Exposure Attorney involvement and claim settlements
- Workforce Size

Recently the city has seen a continual increase in its calculated experience modification rate.

Root Causes

- Nature of public service
- Budget pressures
- Statutory changes
- Overall claims
- Policy development

- Staffing changes

The root cause of workers' compensation claims is absence of a safety and health management system to control hazards, the drivers of injuries and illnesses.

Financial Outlook & Risk Exposure

Risk of maintaining the status quo

- Escalating claim costs
- Worsening negative fund balance
- Higher long-term liabilities
- Missed risk mitigation opportunities
- Reduced financial flexibility
- Cultural normalization of loss

Path to Stabilization

Fund Balance Components

1. Outstanding Liabilities

Recommend 50% to 100% including IBNR and Development

2. Insurance Costs

3. Service Fees

4. Employee Cost Allocation – if applicable

5. Estimated Claims

5-Year Trended

6. Year-End Balance (Reserve)

Goal Amount (Component of Retentions/Deductibles)

Minimum 75% of Goal – Requires Budget Adjustment Strategy

Maximum (125% of Goal – Excess Funds Transferred)

Deductible-Style Cost Share

How It Works

- Each department pays a fixed amount per claim
- The central risk fund pays anything above that amount

Design Decisions

- Set based on department size or claim history
- Option: tiered deductibles

Annual Caps

Timing of Charges

Coinsurance Model

How It Works

- Departments pay a percentage of total claim costs
- Risk fund pays the remainder

Example Structure

- Department pays 20% of all claim costs
- Risk fund pays 80%

Design Decisions

- Coinsurance percentage
- Minimums & Maximums

Hybrid Structure

How It Works

- Combines the best of both approaches
 - o Drives behavior on small claims (frequency)
 - o Medium claims (management)
- Protects departments from catastrophic losses

Example Structure

- First \$XX,XXX per claim = 100% department responsibility
- Next layer = shared (XX%)
- Above \$XX = Risk fund responsibility

Other Key Considerations

Department “Premium” + Cost Share

- Maintain annual contributions
- Layer cost-share on top

Budgeting & Transparency

- Provide departments with:
 - o Annual loss reports
 - o Open claim reserves
 - o Forecasted cost-share exposure

Governance & Policy

- Adopt formal policy defining:
 - o Cost-share structure
 - o Caps & thresholds
 - o Exceptions
- Review Annually

Risk Control and Safety Initiatives

Risk control and safety initiatives

Risk control and safety initiatives reduce the City’s overall exposure by preventing incidents before they occur and minimizing the severity of those that do.

Governance and accountability

Governance and accountability ensure that risk and claims are managed consistently, transparently and in alignment with City policy and financial oversight.

Policy Development

Policies ensure legal compliance, support fiscal stability and promote safer operations across departments and operations.

Specific Actionable Items

1. Complete a comprehensive loss control audit.
2. Establish an Enterprise Risk Management Program supported by city leadership.
3. Develop policies and programs to control safety and health hazards.

2. Historic Sites Master Plan

This item was presented by Andy Struckhoff with PGAV Planners.

The purpose of Today's Work Session is to discuss the present historic site existing conditions and discuss governance options.

Why Historic Sites Matter

- Community identity and civic pride
- Heritage tourism and local economic impact
- Stewardship of irreplaceable public assets
- Rising cost of deferred maintenance

Historic Site Portfolio

- Nine City-owned historic assets
- Different operating models deployed across this portfolio
- Visitation and utilization levels vary
- No unified management framework

Existing Conditions: Individual Historic Sites

- The following slides summarize each City-owned historic site's current operations, use, and key issues

Bingham-Waggoner Estate

19-acre historic estate near downtown

- Operated by Bingham-Waggoner Historical Society
- City-owned; City is responsible for maintenance and capital improvements
- BWHS is responsible for operations pursuant to an agreement with the City.

Vaile Mansion

- Victorian mansion built in 1881
- >10,000 visitors annually
- Operated by Vaile Society
- Strong volunteer engagement
- Increasing restoration needs and associated costs
- Operated by Vaile Society pursuant to an agreement with the City.

Historic Fire House No.

- Downtown historic fire station
- NPS Visitor Center (leases main floor)
- 76 Fire Company (leases lower level)
- City-owned; City pays for utilities and maintenance

Chicago & Alton Railroad Dept.

Restored two-story railroad depot

- Operated by Friends of the C&A Depot •
- Free, volunteer-led tours
- City pays utilities and maintenance

Missouri Model Railroad Museum

Located in the Waggoner-Gates Building

- Volunteer-operated museum
- MMRM charges for admission and special events
- Regional visitor draw
- Houses the Merrill J Mattes Research Library

Oregon-California Trails Association

- Leases City-owned building
- Supports NFTM programming and fundraising
- Provides advertising and financial contributions
- Close relationship to trail-related sites
- Archives housed in the Merrill J. Mattes Research Library

National Frontier Trails Museum

- City-operated museum
- Focus on westward expansion and trails
- Free admission
- Staffed by City with volunteer support
- Flagship tourism asset

Truman Depot

- Active Amtrak station
- Visit Independence leases this building and offices here

1827 Log Courthouse

Original Jackson County courthouse

- City-maintained
- No regular operations or staff
- Limited public use at the moment

Pioneer Spring Cabin

- Historic log cabin
- City-owned and maintained
- Located between the Chicago & Alton Railroad Depot and the Model Railroad Museum
- No active programming
- Currently used for storage

Existing Condiitons

Wide variation in use and staffing

- Uneven volunteer capacity
- Growing maintenance and capital improvement responsibility for the City
- Current operating methods are not sustainable

Recommended Governance Framework

The City has limited resources, and many priorities compete for its limited resources. Future considerations for the ongoing sustainability of these historic sites include:

1. Transitioning them to private ownership,
2. Establishing a non-profit conservancy to manage the sites; or
3. Keeping the properties under City ownership:

Private Ownership

Opportunities:

- Relieve the City of the costs associated with maintenance and staffing;
- Enable volunteer groups to solicit contractors for maintenance or improvements outside of the City's procurement process;
- Encourages fundraising; and
- Potentially create more commercial opportunities for the sites. Challenges:
- Capital improvement expenses; and
- Depth of donor pool in the area.

Private Ownership Case Study

Campbell House Museum

• The Campbell House Museum lies in Downtown St. Louis, preserving the home and Victorian lifestyle of the Campbell family. The home was built in 1851 and was home to the Campbell family until the death of the last surviving child in 1938. By 1941, a local group called the William Clark Society dedicated themselves to preserving this portal to the middle Victorian period and purchased much of the contents of the home through auction.

Conservancy

A "Conservancy" is an organization dedicated to the stewardship of historic places or districts that have significant historic value. These organizations may operate as non-profits or public-private partnerships established to ensure preservation and public access. Opportunities:

- Relieve the City of the costs associated with maintenance and staffing;
- Enable volunteer groups to solicit contractors for maintenance or improvements outside of the City's procurement process;
- Encourages fundraising; and
- Potentially create more commercial opportunities for the sites. Challenges:
- Capital improvement expenses; and
- Depth of donor pool in the area.

Conservancy Case Study

Lafayette Park

Lafayette Park, just south of Downtown St. Louis, is owned by the City of St. Louis and receives regular maintenance like any other City park. The park receives funding from the City general

fund for expenses such as grounds maintenance, facilities maintenance, tree care, utilities, and miscellaneous support services.

City-Ownership

City ownership of the portfolio of historic sites has been the operational program for decades. Of the nine historic sites investigated as part of this study, six of them have operating agreements with groups that effectively run each site on behalf of the City. Each of these agreements are unique to the property and most are on a continuous basis until one party wishes to leave, however some have a limited number of renewals. The remaining three properties are maintained solely by the City and do not have any programming or bring in any revenue.

Opportunities:

- The portfolio of historic sites are an important part of the City's tourism economy.

Challenges:

- Deferred maintenance and capital improvement needs are expensive. The City could ask voters to consider a bond issuance, the proceeds of which could address capital improvement needs. Should the City take that action, the City would be required to maintain ownership until the bonds are fully repaid, which could be as long as 20 years.

Recommendations

Establish a Conservancy to own or manage these five Historic Sites:

- Historic Fire Station No. 1
- Chicago and Alton Railroad Depot
- Pioneer Spring Cabin
- Model Railroad Museum and OCTA Buildings
- Truman Depot

Key aspects that would lead to successful conservancy operation include:

- Hiring a full-time employee for each of the sites;
- Hiring a conservancy manager that can offer a dedicated and unified effort toward the success of these sites;
- Development of a detailed business plan to refine revenue strategies, staffing assumptions, and capital priorities;
- Early capital campaign of \$5 - \$6 million for this five-property, multi-site heritage portfolio; and
- Pursuit of a combined endowment strategy, with either site-specific subaccounts or pooled investment management. A challenge associated with the City's continued ownership of the historic sites is the fact that City ownership may make capital improvements more expensive and timeconsuming. City ownership means a conservancy would need to conform with the City's procurement processes and prevailing wage ordinances when hiring contractors to build improvements.

Private Ownership:

- Vaile Mansion
- Bingham-Waggoner Estate

The Vaile and the Bingham-Waggoner could continue to be protected through deed restrictions

or preservation easements ensuring that, though the City is no longer in control, preservation and public enjoyment remain top priorities. Key aspects that would lead to a successful transfer of ownership include:

- A preservation-minded buyer with the capability to raise the capital required for restoration and long-term maintenance for each property.
- Strict covenants or easements ensuring public access.
- Establishment of a token sale structure such as a \$1 purchase price.
- Restatement of the preservation requirements in the deed of sale.
- Encouragement of long-term endowment management.

Investing in the Sites Each site has capital improvement needs. Improvements to the Vaile and Bingham-Waggoner could cost \$12M to \$15M+

Considerations:

1. Update capital improvement/repair needs assessment for Bingham-Waggoner and the Vaile. Cost may be \$8,000 per property.
2. G.O. Bond to fund improvements, which carries with it a requirement that the City owns properties until bonds are repaid.
3. A one-time investment from City funds (e.g., from revenue generated by data center) to improve buildings before transfer.

City Ownership:

- National Frontier Trails Museum
- The National Frontier Trails Museum is recommended to be retained by the City. The City currently staffs and operates the museum within the Truman Memorial Building and maintains the Merrill J. Mattes Research Library in the same building with the Missouri Model Railroad Museum.
- The National Frontier Trails Museum is an important cultural center that completes the story of the history of the Independence area for visitors as they learn about pioneers venturing westward and the life of the 33rd President of the United States of America, Harry S Truman.

A related recommendation is that the City should also consider the creation of a new, stand-alone building for the National Frontier Trails Museum that could also house the Merrill J. Mattes Research Library. The City should pursue a feasibility study to help them understand the costs associated with development as well as ongoing operating expenses and revenues associated with this museum in a new, stand-alone building.

Next Steps for Council

- Provide feedback on overall direction
- Identify concerns or priorities
- Authorize further feasibility analysis
- No formal decisions required today

CM McCandless asked him to discuss tax credits and asked him if the city could apply for tax credits.

CM Stewart asked when the city took ownership of the Vaile Mansion - 1990's. There is currently an operating agreement between the City and Vaile Mansion.

City Manager Anderson will get a total cost the city spends on operating and maintaining these sites.

The current operation of these sites is not sustainable in his opinion.

The city needs to find funding for these facilities either by a bond or finding ways to help the properties to run more efficiently or the buildings will get to the point where they aren't functional at all.

CM Perkins suggested they get the Bingham-Waggoner and Vaile Mansion groups together to discuss options and future plans.

3. IPL Governance

Deputy City Manager Lisa Reynolds discussed this item. The City Manager's Office is looking for direction with moving forward whether it will be on a ballot in August. CM Perkins suggested this be moved to a future date so new councilmembers can be up to speed on the subject before making any decisions. CM Stewart agreed this should be delayed so parts of it can be revisited. CM Fears and Mayor Rowland stressed how important this topic is to the City and to the citizens and that it needs to be well thought out and planned.

INFORMATION ONLY

1. **Please Note:** In accordance with RSMo. 610.021, the City Council may convene in a Closed Executive Session during or after the meeting, on matters of litigation, legal action, and/or attorney client communications, as permitted by Sec. 610.021(1), on matters of personnel, as permitted by Sec. 610.021(3) and personnel records, as permitted by 610.021(13), on matters of contracts, as permitted by 610.021(12), on matters of real estate, as permitted by 610.021(2) and/or matters of labor negotiations, as permitted by 610.021(9).

Meeting adjourned at 7:51 p.m.